

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PHNOM 01636 031205Z

51

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04

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R 031121Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO USIA WASHDC

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 4822

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E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PFOR US CB

SUBJECT: INACCURATE VOA REPORTING

FOR DIRECTOR KEOGH FROM ENDERS

1. AS A FIRST CAMBODIAN ITEM THIS MORNING'S 0600 VOA WORLD NEWS (2300 GMT SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2) CARRIED A STATEMENT THAT COMMUNIST GUNNERS HAD SHOT DOWN A KHMER AIR FORCE PLANE. WE ASSUME THAT KHMER LANGUAGE BROADCAST CARRIED SAME REPORT. APPARENTLY VOA PREFERRED TO CARRY THE VERSION GIVEN BY WIRE SERVICES TO THE VERIFIED FACTS PROVIDED IN PARA 5 OF OUR REFTEL SITUATIONER OF YESTERDAY WHICH (ON THIS ITEM) READ AS FOLLOWS: QUOTE. IN THE FORST SUCH INCIDENT IN MANY MONTHS, A KHMER AIR FORCE T-28 FIGHTER-BOMBER EARLY SATURDAY MORNING WHICH WAS COMPLETING A BOMBING MISSION IN THE ROUTE 3 AREA TO THE SOUTHWEST OF THE CAPITAL COLLIDED WITH A SPOTTER PLANE CONTROLLING THE STRIKE. BOTH PLANES CRASHED AND THE TWO PILOTS WERE KILLED. UNQUOTE.NOTE THAT OUR SITUATIONER WAS SENT PRECEDENCE IMMEDIATE AT 020857Z FEB 74, WELL IN TIME FOR THE VOA REPORT.

2. I AM UNABLE UNDERSTAND WHY VOA NEWS ROOM, WITH OUR REPORT IN HAND, WOULD PUT OUT AN ITEM THAT WAS FALSE. SUCH REPORTING DESTROYS CREDIBILITY OF VOA IN CAMBODIA, AROUSES DOUBTS AMONG KHMER AS TO THE US GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE REPUBLIC, GIVES COMMUNIST

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PAGE 02 PHNOM 01636 031205Z

MILITARY FORCES CREDIT THAT THEY DO NOT DESERVE AND REINFORCES

COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA.

3. THIS INCIDENT IS ONLY THE LAST OF A LONG SERIES RESULTING FROM VOA'S (A) PROPENSITY TO BE TAKEN IN BY UNFOUNDED WIRE SERVICE REPORTS, (B) UNEVEN TREATMENT OF NEWS FAVORABLE TO THE REPUBLIC, AND (C) INSENSITIVITY TO GREAT PRESSURES THE WAR BRINGS TO BEAR ON THE KHMER PUBLIC. IT IS CONTRARY TO AMERICAN INTERESTS THAT THIS ERRATIC REPORTING CONTINUE.

4. TO ASSURE THAT VOA NEWCASTER'S KEEP OUT OF TROUBLE, I PROPOSE THAT IN THE FUTURE ALL CAMBODIAN NEWS ON THE KHMER LANGUAGE SERVICE BE CONFINED TO (A) OUR DAILY SITUATIONERS, (B) OFFICIAL TEXTS OF STATEMENTS BY USG AGENCIES AND OFFICIALS, AND (C) ITEMS CARRIED BY THE KHMER REPUBLIC OFFICIAL RADIO (VIA FBIS).

5. MISSION IS ENDEAVORING PROVIDE A MORE ROBUST AND VERSATILE DAILY SITUATIONER AND SUBMIT SPOT REPORTS WITH GREATER FREQUENCY. SITUATIONER IS CAREFULLY PREPARED BY PAO, DAO, POL/MIL SECTION AND DCM.

6. NOTE THAT THE STANDARD VOA POSITIONS IN REGARD TO THE CONDUCT OF NEWS REPORTING HAVE NO RPT NO RELEVANCE TO CAMBODIA. THE KHMER ARE FIGHTING AN ALL-OUT WAR TO DEFEND THEIR INDEPENDENCE: THEY DEPEND ON OUR SUPPORT FOR SURVIVAL. HAVING SEEN AND HEARD MUCH EVIDENCE OF OUR AID, THEY FIND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO UNDERSTAND

THE SEEMING NEUTRALITY OF THE OFFICIAL US BROADCASTING SERVICE ON THE WAR, OR THE EXTENSIVE AND DIGNIFIED TREATMENT OFTEN GIVEN TO THE COMMUNISTS AND SIHANOUK AS WELL AS THE NON-COMMUNIST CRITICS OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PHNOM PENH. THE KHMER EXPECTS THE VOA TO PROVIDE AN ACCURATE AND BALANCED ACCOUNT OF WHAT IS HAPPENING IN CAMBODIA, IN A CONTEXT OF SYMPATHY FOR THE REPUBLIC. WE AGREE THAT TO FULFILL THESE EXPECTATIONS WOULD BE A PROPER GOAL FOR VOA.

7. WE NEED A FINAL SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM. LET ME KNOW HOW WE CAN SOLVE IT.
ENDERS

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Draft Date: 03 FEB 1974
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Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
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Errors: N/A
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